United Nations A/62/PV.80

General Assembly

Sixty-second session

Official Records

80th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 12 February 2008, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kerim ..... (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 132 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/62/657 and Add.1)

The President: Before turning to the thematic debate, I would like, in keeping with established practice, to draw the attention of the General Assembly to document A/62/657 and its addendum 1.

In document A/62/657, the Secretary-General informs the Assembly that 15 Member States are in arrears in the payment of their financial contributions to the United Nations within the terms of Article 19 of the Charter.

I would like to remind delegations that, under Article 19 of the Charter,

> "A Member of the United Nations which is in arrears in the payment of its financial contributions to the Organization shall have no vote in the General Assembly if the amount of its arrears equals or exceeds the amount of the contributions due from it for the preceding two full years".

In document A/62/657/Add.1, the Secretary-General informs the Assembly that, since the issuance of his communication contained in document A/62/657, Vanuatu has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly takes note of the information contained in those documents?

It was so decided.

Thematic debate entitled "Addressing climate change: The United Nations and the world at work"

Agenda items 48, 54 and 116 (*continued*)

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Sustainable development

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Report of the Secretary-General (A/62/644)

The President: The general debate of the General Assembly in September 2007 set the stage for a comprehensive examination of climate change. Member States subsequently adopted resolution 62/8, requesting the Secretary-General to specify the actions the United Nations currently undertakes on climate change to support Member States in existing international frameworks.

On this occasion, I would like to commend the Secretary-General for quickly responding to the request of Member States for a report on the United Nations activities in relation to climate change. This should serve as a good basis for Member States to set out their viewpoints on the way forward.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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I would also like to congratulate Member States on their tremendous efforts to secure an initial agreement in Bali. There is more hard work to come, but the stage is now set to put in place a comprehensive post-Kyoto agreement. However, the combined efforts of all stakeholders are necessary to comprehensively tackle climate change effectively.

Many countries cannot wait until the effects of mitigation targets have begun to be felt. We need all targets and immediate practical actions that can help the most vulnerable adapt to climate change. What is required now is a clear strategic vision from Member States so that all parts of the United Nations system can direct their efforts to where they are most needed.

These insights have significant implications for the way the United Nations works. Leaders from across the United Nations system have asked for clear, political backing from Member States in order to be able to move forward and implement the necessary technical and managerial changes, so that the United Nations can truly deliver more than the sum of its parts, so that it can deliver as one.

The steps taken to improve coordination through the Chief Executives Board, under the leadership of the Secretary-General, are a good beginning. However, many Member States have clearly expressed their desire to support and develop this process by setting out the general principles of a policy framework for United Nations activities on climate change.

To do so, there are some pertinent questions that we should ask. First, what strategic goals should the United Nations adopt to prepare for the post-Kyoto regime in 2012? What is the financial architecture that can best channel funds to these priorities? How can we effectively mainstream climate change into the development agenda? And, finally, how can we achieve better coherence within the United Nations system?

We cannot wait for tomorrow. We need to act today. That is why I convened this meeting of the General Assembly: to give Member States the opportunity to provide the political direction that the United Nations system needs.

While we should not try to micromanage, and today is just the beginning of this process, it is nevertheless extremely important that Member States work speedily and cooperatively in order to reach agreement on the principles of a strategic policy framework to guide the climate change activities of the United Nations.

There is growing confidence, among all stakeholders, that we can deliver tangible, practical action to address climate change issues at the global level. I therefore look forward to a substantive, cooperative debate focused on results. It is up to the General Assembly to demonstrate leadership through a willingness to act for the good of all that live on this fragile planet.

Before proceeding further, I would like to draw the attention of members to some organizational matters pertaining to the conduct of the meeting. In order to accommodate everyone inscribed on the list of speakers — and there are 117 names currently inscribed on it — speakers are urged to adhere to the five-minute limit for their statements. This would not preclude the distribution of more extensive texts. I appeal to speakers to cooperate in this respect.

Also, in order to assist speakers in managing their time, a light system has been installed at the speakers' rostrum which functions as follows: a green light will be activated at the start of the speaker's statement; an orange light will be activated 30 seconds before the end of the five minutes; a red light will be activated when the five minutes have elapsed.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. John William Ashe, Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda.

Mr. Ashe (Antigua and Barbuda): The Group of 77 and China thank you, Mr. President, for convening this thematic debate in the General Assembly, entitled "Addressing climate change: the United Nations and the world at work". It provides the Assembly with an additional opportunity for an exchange of views among Member States and with other partners on one of the more important issues on the development agenda of the United Nations.

At the outset, the Group of 77 and China reiterates that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is, and should remain, the primary comprehensive framework for addressing climate change. Therefore, this thematic debate should be recognized as an opportunity for Member States to dialogue on ways of increasing support for the Framework, meeting the urgent need for immediate action to fully implement commitments

under the Convention and its Kyoto Protocol and supporting the Bali Action Plan and other mechanisms of the Convention.

The Group of 77 and China is of the view that there should not be a parallel process of debates that would detract from the negotiation process under the Convention. We believe that multilateral action to address climate change should remain firmly rooted in the Convention and its Kyoto Protocol.

Furthermore, this thematic debate, and the Secretary-General's report on the overview of United Nations activities in relation to climate change, should not attempt to influence any other processes such as the system-wide coherence debate or the discussions on international environmental governance.

The Group is of the view that discussions on climate change should be placed within the proper context of sustainable development. It is imperative that our discussion reinforce the promotion of sustainable development, highlighting the three pillars — economic development, social development and environmental protection — and the need to promote all three in an integrated, coordinated and balanced manner.

We must not lose sight of the fact that climate change is a sustainable development challenge. We should adhere steadfastly to the Rio principles, in particular the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. We must take fully into account that poverty eradication and economic and social development are the paramount priorities of developing countries. Hence, we must ensure that the discussion on climate change is placed in its proper context so that it does not undermine the overall discourse on sustainable development.

Urgent action is needed now to fully implement the commitments under the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol, especially commitments on financing for adaptation, technology transfer and capacity-building, if we are to make progress towards the achievement of the sustainable development goals of developing countries, in particular the internationally agreed development goals including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Urgent action on commitments is particularly needed, as climate change threatens the livelihoods of the very poor and vulnerable developing countries, in particular States in Africa, the least developed countries, the landlocked developing countries, the small island developing States and the disaster-prone developing countries. The Group is of the view that, while addressing the challenge of climate change, the most affected countries and the most vulnerable countries should be given adequate attention and support.

Parties in the developed world must take the lead in addressing the implementation gap, since the extent to which parties in the developing world can effectively respond to the challenge depends on the extent to which the parties in the developed world fulfil their commitments relating to financing and technology transfer.

While the United Nations can support the efforts of developing countries in formulating policies for attracting climate-change-related investment flows, adaptation and nationally appropriate mitigation actions will have to be enabled by technology, financing and capacity-building that are commensurate with the magnitude of the tasks ahead of us; that is, in a measurable, reportable and verifiable manner, as agreed in the Bali Plan of Action on the Regional and Subregional Economic Cooperation of the Developing Countries. The provision of financial resources is a binding commitment of developed-country parties. Clear guidance should be given to facilitate access to financial resources and investments without conditionalities. It is essential that such financial resources be considered not as official development assistance, but as additional assistance, and be in compliance with existing binding commitments under the Convention. Further, financing for adaptation to climate change and the impact of response measures should not be a reallocation or realignment of existing development financing.

Developing countries should be provided with greater access to cost-effective, efficient and affordable advanced clean technologies. The Group of 77 and China has repeatedly led calls for developing countries to have greater access to climate-friendly technologies. Efforts in that regard need to be scaled up. Furthermore, the United Nations can play an important role through the promotion of an intellectual property rights regime that facilitates the transfer of such technologies.

The Group of 77 and China reiterates its call for increased support for capacity-building in developing countries, to enhance national efforts to promote an integrated approach to climate-change-response measures and sustainable-development planning.

The efforts of the United Nations in supporting national adaptation activities must be strengthened so that developing countries can achieve their sustainable development goals while responding to the challenges of climate change. The role of the United Nations in supporting overall development efforts is vital. However, the G77 and China finds that technology transfer and financing have not been addressed adequately in the background documents made available in preparation for today's debate.

On the issue of partnerships, the G77 and China is of the view that multi-stakeholder partnerships have an important role to play in addressing climate change. The United Nations system should assist in fostering and promoting partnerships in support of national efforts. However, partnerships should not replace official development assistance or international cooperation.

Additionally, South-South cooperation is useful in the area of adaptation efforts, and greater support for South-South cooperation can also help developing countries better respond to the challenges of climate change. However, South-South cooperation should not be considered within the context of multi-stakeholder partnerships. Further, South-South cooperation on climate change should complement North-South cooperation.

In General Assembly resolution 62/8, Member States requested a comprehensive report providing an overview of the activities of the United Nations system in relation to climate change. On the basis of that mandate, the G77 and China anticipated a factual report that takes stock of current United Nations system activities in that regard. As such, there is no mandate with regard to "an indication of the way forward", and "coordination of the United Nations system action on climate change". That remains within the purview of the Member States. Work on coordination mechanisms and structures or frameworks, including clusters of activity or lead agencies, must be the subject of intergovernmental consideration and decision prior to implementation.

In general, the United Nations system entities should assist in the effective implementation of the provisions, commitments and action plans of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Coordination of United Nations system activities to enhance its role in meeting the challenge of climate change requires intergovernmental consideration, agreement and oversight by Member States.

The G77 and China recognizes the primacy of the United Nations in directing and supporting global efforts to meet the global challenge of climate change and in supporting the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The General Assembly, given its universality, should unequivocally urge parties to undertake action now to meet their commitments under the Convention, provide clear policy direction in this regard and support the Bali Plan of Action.

The G77 and China believes that the road to Copenhagen, where the concluding talks on the current process on the Bali Road Map will be held in 2009, will be a difficult one, particularly for developing countries and the poorest and most vulnerable. Leadership will therefore be critical if our response is to reflect the scale of the challenge. To cover adaptation, technology transfer and financing, and mitigation, we need a global response that is effective and comprehensive, and reflects the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. Without rapid and tangible efforts by developed countries in that regard, climate change will lead to increased poverty and will negate our efforts at achieving sustainable development.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Tavau Teii, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Natural Resources and Environment of Tuvalu.

Mr. Teii (Tuvalu): First of all, I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this thematic debate. I also wish to congratulate and commend you on your foresight in encouraging a United Nations-wide discussion on the issue of climate change. Allow me to also thank the Secretary-General for his continuous commitment and leadership on the issue of climate change and welcome his report on the overview of United Nations activities in relation to climate change.

Without a doubt, climate change is one of the greatest challenges that faces humanity today. We clearly need a comprehensive approach to addressing this issue. I am pleased to note that the Bali Conference in December 2007 set forth a strategy that is an important milestone in our journey to fight climate change.

Tuvalu fully associates itself with the statements to be delivered by the representatives of the Kingdom of Tonga, Grenada and Bangladesh, on behalf of the Pacific Island countries, the Alliance of Small Island States and the Group of Least Developed Countries, respectively.

Therefore, I would like to focus my speech on just one of the questions for discussion: how can the United Nations system assist in scaling up support for adaptation? It is recognized that adaptation to climate change needs to be part of the policy and investment decisions of countries, the private sector, international agencies and other relevant actors. We need to enhance networking capacities and coordination for international joint action.

Adaptation is undoubtedly a crucial issue for an extremely vulnerable small atoll island nation like Tuvalu. I need only highlight the fact that our highest point above sea level is only 4 metres to emphasize our vulnerability to the impacts of climate change, especially sea level rise.

Last year, Tuvalu produced an international blueprint on adaptation, which we presented as a submission to the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. For those who may be interested in reading our blueprint, I have included a website address for it as a footnote to the written text of my speech. This blueprint highlights a number of areas where we envisage greater collaboration within the United Nations system. Let me highlight some of them.

First, it is very clear that financial resources for adaptation are completely inadequate. Last year, Oxfam International released a report which suggested that the adaptation needs of developing countries will cost a minimum of $50 billion per year, a figure higher than the current World Bank estimate of $10.4 billion annually. We must work together, under the umbrella of the United Nations, to find these additional funds.

One means of increasing the funding for adaptation is through the creation of what we call a burden-sharing mechanism. Funding for this mechanism could come from a levy on international aviation and maritime transport. Some exceptions would apply to the levy so that we would not create a burden for the least developed countries and small island developing States. Therefore, we need the United Nations to develop a collaborative arrangement with the International Civil Aviation Organization and the International Maritime Organization to develop such a levy. We would encourage the convening of a meeting of senior officers from those organizations with senior officials from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Climate Change Convention some time this year to facilitate the appropriate arrangements for this levy.

Secondly, we need collaborative action among United Nations institutions and non-governmental organizations to develop a comprehensive approach to long-term adaptation action. As a first step, we envisage a collaborative programme between the Convention secretariat and parties and the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and its participating countries. We believe that a special coordination committee should be established under the auspices of the General Assembly. This climate change adaptation implementation committee would also include other United Nations agencies, such as UNDP, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO), and other institutions such as the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and various non-governmental organizations with experience in the field of adaptation. Again, we would like to see this committee established this year. We therefore hope that the General Assembly will be convened to adopt a resolution in support of such a committee as soon as possible.

Thirdly, our international blueprint on adaptation also proposes the establishment of an international climate insurance pool. This would be an internationally sourced pool of funds for an insurance mechanism to provide support to the most vulnerable communities for meeting the costs of rebuilding after climate-related disasters. We envisage that such an

insurance facility would be administered by a special group within UNDP under the guidance of existing reinsurance companies. Here, internationally agreed climate threshold triggers for payouts to communities would need to be established. We encourage UNDP to facilitate a special meeting some time this year to begin the process of establishing this insurance facility.

These ideas I have just elaborated upon are but three among a number of others in our international blueprint on adaptation. We lay no special claim to ownership of this blueprint. We would like the United Nations system to embrace it and take it on as a truly United Nations blueprint. We encourage you, Mr. President, to look closely at the blueprint and work with your colleagues to develop these ideas further. We strongly encourage you to consider convening a special meeting of the General Assembly for the drafting and endorsement of a resolution to facilitate the implementation of these ideas on adaptation.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Janez Podobnik, Minister of the Environment and Spatial Planning of the Republic of Slovenia.

Mr. Podobnik (Slovenia): It is an honour to address the Assembly in this important thematic debate on behalf of the European Union (EU). The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia, align themselves with this declaration.

Climate change represents one of the major challenges facing our planet. We can already see its impacts as it threatens to undermine the livelihoods of future generations. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change published its authoritative findings in 2007 and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for its exceptional work. The report clearly states that anthropogenic global greenhouse gas emissions increased by about 70 per cent between 1970 and 2004. Our current understanding of the problem and the high risks involved leave no option for any responsible policymaker but to act. In this respect, today's thematic debate is most welcome as a way to further develop and support the decisive role of the United Nations in this matter.

Climate change is upon us, and we believe it is time to act. The European Union has put climate change at the top of its political agenda. International collective action is crucial for an effective, efficient and equitable response to the challenges posed by climate change. Working together will benefit every one of us.

The European Union will continue its efforts aimed at building international consensus on the urgent need to take further and stronger post-2012 action. We are doing our homework by implementing and further developing comprehensive community climate change policies. The European Commission recently presented the legislative Climate Action and Renewable Energy Package, which will be instrumental in shaping a response in line with our commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the EU by at least 20 per cent by 2020, relative to 1990 levels. The Package has provisions to reduce the EU's emissions by as much as 30 per cent, as part of a global agreement in which all developed countries commit themselves to comparable efforts and developing countries also contribute further. We are convinced that transforming Europe into a highly energy efficient, low-carbon economy will improve our energy security and strengthen our competitiveness. Let me reiterate the European Union's objective to limit the global average temperature increase to less than 2 centigrade degrees relative to pre-industrial levels.

Last year was a turning point for international action against climate change. The Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change underlined the urgent need for action. Subsequently, all parties at the Climate Conference in Bali agreed to launch an inclusive negotiating process on a new global and comprehensive post-2012 agreement in December 2009 in Copenhagen. Importantly, it was agreed that all developed and developing countries need to take appropriate action to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, in line with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

The Bali agreement addresses a shared vision for long-term cooperative action and identifies four key building blocks: mitigation, adaptation, technology and financing. That is a very important step forward, but it leaves many important decisions to be made in the coming two years. The EU has already presented its general ideas in that respect. In the view of the EU, all the building blocks are equally important and must be

dealt with accordingly. The main objectives of mitigation and adaptation cannot be achieved without supporting the development and transfer of clean technologies and scaling up and redirecting investment and finance flows.

The Bali Conference also took important decisions on several other issues, including the launching of demonstration activities aimed at reducing deforestation; the finalization of arrangements for the Adaptation Fund, which will help developing countries adapt to the impacts of climate change; and a strategic programme on the transfer of technologies to developing countries.

Our world is increasingly interconnected. It is thus impossible to talk about climate change and development as two unrelated issues. Climate change is a sustainable development challenge that will affect our natural environment as well as our social and economic development. The goal of halving the proportion of poor people in the world by the year 2015 will be impossible to achieve if we do not give due consideration to the natural resources and the environment our livelihoods depend upon. However, meeting development needs and achieving poverty eradication while reducing greenhouse gas emissions and the impact of climate change will present a challenge to all of us.

Several important events will be taking place this year, such as the dialogue on financing for development, a high-level event on the Millennium Development Goals and the Hokkaido-Toyako summit under the Japanese presidency of the Group of Eight. We must ensure that climate change will be addressed in those debates and that the relationship among climate change, energy security, environment, development, finance and trade is further defined and explored. Since it cuts across the four building blocks identified in Bali, the integration of climate into development plans is crucial. The overarching objective is to achieve sustainable development, and the United Nations should play a key role in supporting integrated policy- and decision-making at all levels.

The EU is committed to promoting climate-focused stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere and adaptation in the context of sustainable development. Increased integration of adaptation and mitigation efforts into national sustainable development strategies is therefore essential to combating climate change.

If the attempts to reach a global post-2012 agreement on climate change are to breed results, the process leading to such an agreement and its scope must be all-encompassing.

Nevertheless, the key issue remains: how can we all contribute? Unequivocal scientific evidence, the increasing impact of climate events and the resulting increase in public attention have elevated climate change to a high position on the political agenda. The international community needs to respond to that challenge. The United Nations provides the appropriate multilateral framework within which to deal with the issue, and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is the only forum in which global decisions about future actions can be agreed.

The time has come for the United Nations to strengthen its response to climate change and speak with a united voice. The United Nations system must be capable of working together to support international efforts to address the negative impacts of climate change: through the UNFCCC, as the appropriate multilateral framework for negotiations, as we look to a global agreement on a post-2012 framework; through the work of the agencies, funds and programmes that are best placed to provide an integrated response to the complementary challenges of promoting sustainable development, achieving the Millennium Development Goals and tackling the impacts of climate change; and through the voice of the Secretary-General, who has so effectively galvanized the international response over the past year.

It is in that light that the EU fully supports the efforts under the leadership of the Secretary-General and carried out by the Chief Executives Board to achieve a coordinated United Nations approach to climate change. Much good work is already under way in many parts of the United Nations system. The continuation of that process will enable the United Nations system to identify its strengths and, consequently, the areas in which it can maximize its contribution to fighting climate change.

We, as Member States, must also take responsibility by supporting that process through our own actions. Implementing a post-2012 climate change framework will present fundamental challenges to the

global community and calls for strengthened international environmental governance. Of particular importance will be the financing of enhanced mitigation and adaptation efforts, which calls for new and innovative concepts. That will require enhanced cooperation between various stakeholders from the private and public sectors.

Climate change has the potential to redraw the face of our planet. Science has clearly underlined that the time has come for all of us to act. According to polls undertaken in many countries of the world, a vast proportion of the world's population believes that the international community must take a different path if we are to prevent the consequences of climate change. Several events have shown us that there is increasing political will to do so.

However, there is always room for improvement. The United Nations can play an important role in assisting in this process, not only by addressing the capacity gap to act and thus safeguarding Millennium Development Goals, but also by leading the process to generate global consciousness. Certain activities can be undertaken by the system, within the framework of the mandates provided to it by Member States.

However, at the end of the day, we must not forget that the United Nations is the sum of its Member States and it is up to us to determine the size of that sum.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Rachmat Witoelar, Minister of Environment of Indonesia and President of the United Nations Climate Change Conference.

Mr. Witoelar (Indonesia): At the outset, Mr. President, allow me to thank you for convening this important event to address one of the major challenges to humanity: climate change. I sincerely commend the initiative to keep this issue as a top priority on the agenda of the General Assembly at its current session.

Allow me to state that I align myself with the statement of the representative of Antigua and Barbuda, who spoke on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Just a few months ago, the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Bali agreed on the Bali Action Plan, also known as the Bali Road Map. The Bali Road Map was a strategic and important milestone. It marked a crucial turning point, not only in the area of climate change, but also for humanity. The political commitment was unprecedented, and we must continue on that path.

The exceptional feature of the Bali Road Map is that it reflects a common understanding that no country is immune to climate change. Responding to it certainly requires the effort of developed and developing countries. More action can be expected to take place in the developing world, with more ambitious commitments by developed countries.

But let us bear in mind that the window of opportunity is short; we have only 2008 and 2009 to detail the four building blocks: mitigation, adaptation, technology transfer and financing. Based on our success in Bali, we are convinced that political partnership must be nurtured, and that it should continue to guide and imbue the negotiation process in the two years ahead.

While political partnerships are essential, the next question is what kind of partnership will contribute to more effective implementation. In my view, a genuine partnership involves all stakeholders who recognize their common but differentiated responsibilities. That implies that we must muster our sense of urgency to make the necessary choices to curb global warming. There is no other way to do that but for us to begin thinking outside the box. All of us must dare to recalibrate our new perspective and introduce fresh approaches to our problems. It is important for all of us to do more and to do things differently in our entire life-sphere. All of us can and must contribute to completing our hard work in safeguarding our planet.

Indonesia firmly believes that our attempt to cope with climate change problems requires the active involvement of all nations — developed and developing, large and small, North and South — and the active engagement of the private sector, civil society and every human being, of every generation and background. Partnership, within and across nations, is the key to our global environmental and climatic concerns.

For that reason, Indonesia, as the President of the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, feels compelled to continue to play its role in implementing those commitments by working together with all stakeholders. Together with President of the

upcoming fourteenth and fifteenth sessions of the Conference, we will endeavour to ensure the beginning of a new chapter in the history of climate change in 2009.

I am also pleased to state that, as part of Indonesia's commitment to participating with all nations to address climate change, we have launched a National Action Plan for Climate Change. The National Action Plan serves as an implementation guide for climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts by all stakeholders in Indonesia.

Let me also emphasize that Indonesia welcomes and recognizes all initiatives and discussions within various international processes. They all serve to provide valuable input to the process under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), including the recent outcomes of the major economic meeting held in Honolulu, Hawaii, which strengthened the success of the Bali Road Map and promoted energy efficiency. It is essential, however, that existing and new commitments post-2012 are deliberated within the UNFCCC, as it is the key instrument and the proper forum for addressing climate change.

It is pertinent to underline that the United Nations has a legitimate role in bridging development and climate change concerns with all stakeholders. The United Nations should therefore be well equipped to address the challenge of development and climate change in a more coherent and focused manner, particularly for achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

The United Nations effort to bolster cooperation within the Secretariat and with the broader United Nations system is a step in the right direction. To that end, the United Nations may consider the need to integrate all relevant existing frameworks in order to create an effective umbrella and mechanism to respond to climate change in the future. All United Nations activities related to climate change should be delivered in a coherent package.

Responding to climate change will require humanity's total capacity. Let us build togetherness and global ownership at all levels and in all sectors to battle a common enemy. The panel discussions conducted yesterday clearly indicated — and, as a matter of fact, reaffirmed — our conviction of the growing strategic importance of building partnerships. We have attained ample political commitments from Governments, the private sector and non-governmental organizations around the world, and hence we at the United Nations must cultivate the political momentum and global call, and translate them into policy, action plans and consistent implementation. After all, that is the main message of our theme today: the United Nations and the world at work.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Champika Ranawaka, Minister of Environment and Natural Resources of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Ranawaka (Sri Lanka): Allow me to first thank you, Mr. President, and the Secretary-General for the timely convening of this important meeting.

The degree of the impact of climate change varies from country to country. But the stark reality is that the countries with lower economic status and with low emissions levels are the most vulnerable to the impact of climate change. The global per capita carbon threshold is 2,200 kilograms; by comparison, Sri Lanka's current emissions level is as low as 600 kilograms. In reality, that means that we could increase per capita emissions threefold. However, such an approach would definitely contribute to a critical imbalance in the system. Therefore, island nations like my own, which are highly vulnerable to climate change, are faced with the dual challenge of achieving economic development and responding to climate change as well.

We all agree that, despite various interventions at all levels, atmospheric temperature continues to rise. The concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere is also on the increase. As we are now entering into a new phase of formulating strategies to respond to climate change, we need to think afresh.

The present generation, including each person in this Hall, me and all of us together, has the responsibility of ensuring a better life for future generations. The environment and all its resources, which the present generation uses — and also misuses — is something we have borrowed from future generations, those born and yet to be born.

Therefore, unless there is a critical paradigm shift in our thinking even at this late stage, current trends will continue jeopardizing the right of present and future generations to live.

There are two options before us. One is to continue the current practices and pass a huge environmental debt to future generations of living beings of the developing countries.

It is estimated that the current carbon budget will be exhausted by 2032. Therefore, if we continue the blame game and carry on with business as usual, we will require at least two more planets to sustain the present growth. The only option is to work together to restore the already degraded environment and natural resource base and build strong environmental capital so that the survival of future generations is ensured.

We all have contributed to the environmental debt in different proportions. As we all know, the human development index reports of the United Nations Development Programme rank all countries of the globe based on certain criteria, and per capita purchasing parity is one of them. We know that, with maybe a very few exceptions, countries with high per capita income also have a high share of greenhouse gas emissions. In contrast, the contribution to global warming by less developed countries with low per capita income is comparatively minimal. Thus, if we consider this very critical environmental element, which goes hand in hand with so-called economic development, the picture we see will be totally different from what we see today.

In keeping with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, it is thus not fair to expect the developing nations to shoulder the full burden of responding to climate change impact. Historically, their contributions to climate change have been minimal, and they will continue to be so.

Therefore, our new agreement needs to be developed to include all these different aspects. In parallel, we also need to make a candid assessment of the success of the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol. Our own assessment is that those instruments have not made a significant impact towards reversing the present trends.

At this stage, it is also important to recognize the overarching nature of climate change: it can have direct and indirect influence on any activity on Earth. Thus, various initiatives under other environmental treaties would automatically become subsets of the climate change phenomenon. Such a realignment of activities would significantly contribute towards optimal utilization of resources while minimizing the chances of overlaps, both at the global and the national levels.

There is no miracle cure for climate change-related problems; nor can these challenges be resolved by any single country on its own. Thus, first and the foremost, it is critical that all actors concerned implement the measures to which they have already committed.

Before I conclude, please allow me to quote from the Karaniyameththa Suththa, which contains key important teachings of Lord Buddha. As Lord Buddha said in one of his sermons, the world is a complex, integrated system in which man is one among many players; all players should respect one another's right to survive. This world belongs to present generations as well as those yet to be born, and we must protect it the way a mother looks after her only child. Therefore, on behalf of the future generations, let us take guidance from these noble truths in our quest for finding solutions to this, the greatest challenge facing humanity today.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Jacqueline Cramer, Minister of the Environment and Spatial Planning of the Netherlands.

Ms. Cramer (Netherlands): Just over a month ago, the world gathered in Indonesia to agree on much-needed further steps in the global fight against climate change. That meeting was a turning point in our efforts to address climate change. Now is the time to start implementing the Bali Action Plan without delay. In that effort, the United Nations will have to play a leading role. I therefore warmly welcome the leadership of the Secretary-General in this regard and applaud his decision to make the fight against climate change such a high priority for the United Nations.

The report of the Secretary-General on United Nations activities on climate change (A/62/644) makes it clear that the wider United Nations family is already significantly contributing. But further steps are now needed. I would therefore strongly invite the Secretary-General to make further recommendations on the specific role of the different parts of the United Nations system in ensuring a coordinated response to climate change.

With that in mind, I would like to focus on one particular topic. The global fight against climate

change requires us to mobilize resources on a nearly unprecedented scale — not only human and political resources, but also financial flows. We will need to find billions of dollars over the next 20 years to place the world on a low-carbon, sustainable-energy path, to take measures to protect vulnerable populations from the impacts of climate change and to tackle the issue of deforestation effectively.

The bulk of the extra financial flows will have to come from the private sector. In seeking market opportunities and pursuing innovation, it will have to scale up climate-friendly and energy-related investments. To make this happen, Governments should create a favourable investment climate, provide the right incentives, as well as work towards a long-term international framework. Today, such incentives are often lacking. So, let us engage the private sector more actively in the discussion on how to formulate a post-2012 arrangement that is cost-effective, flexible and fair.

But, of course, public funding remains an important source as well. Industrialized countries should, at the national level, support and stimulate climate change initiatives of the private sector, of non-governmental organizations and of society at large. Moreover, additional public funding should be mobilized to assist developing countries in their particular mitigation and adaptation actions. This will also help to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

As I have said on earlier occasions, the industrialized countries have caused the main part of the climate change problem, and it is therefore up to the industrialized world to provide the main part of the solution. We will have to lead this effort. We should therefore discuss what should be done in that regard.

Let me highlight two points. Firstly, there is already a great deal of funding out there. Let us make better use of it, avoid a proliferation of funds and better harmonize existing resources. The Netherlands has made available €500 million for investment in, and promotion of, renewable energy in developing countries. We will make sure that this funding fits in well with the many other initiatives currently undertaken and will address the priorities of our partner countries.

Secondly, there is a need for additional and predictable public financing. The question is which financial mechanisms we should put into place to manage these financial resources. Here too, the United Nations system is uniquely equipped to support us; I have in mind especially the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Development Programme and also the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

In closing, I will use my position as Dutch Minister of the Environment to further the international discussion of the financing issue and promote partnerships with the private sector. I firmly believe that progress in this area is the key that can unlock the door to solving the problem of climate change.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Angelo Reyes, Secretary of Energy and Chairman of the Presidential Task Force on Climate Change of the Philippines.

Mr. Reyes (Philippines): As a developing country, the Philippines accounts for a minuscule share of global greenhouse gas emissions. Yet, as a tropical archipelago located in both the typhoon belt and the Pacific Rim's so-called ring of fire, our country is among the most highly vulnerable to the effects of global warming. It is for that reason that we welcome this initiative of the United Nations to host a thematic debate on climate change.

As a member of the Group of 77 and China, this statement is also aligned with the concerns that were presented by our colleague from Antigua and Barbuda earlier this morning.

In view of the limited time available, I shall deliver an abbreviated version of the prepared statement that is being made available for reference. Let me summarize our delegation's position and our recommendations by underscoring five key points.

First, we wish to echo the statement made yesterday by General Assembly President Srgjan Kerim that we need "a common vision, a global consensus, a global alliance for action".

For clearly an issue like climate change cannot be addressed by individual nations, or even by an institution as broad-based as the United Nations. If, indeed, scientific consensus has been reached that human activity is the main cause of global warming, then our planet would best be served by the moral suasion of the United Nations in affirming that consensus and working towards the fulfilment of

national commitments to halt, if not reverse, the tragic trajectory of climate change.

Secondly, over lunch yesterday, Sir Richard Branson stressed the pre-eminent need for scientific action in the light of the reality that mitigation and other prescient strategies will do nothing to thin the layer of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. This thin layer is already pushing global temperatures on a precariously upward path, even as we speak. This opens up another potential for United Nations intervention, perhaps as the custodian of an international fund to activate research by a multinational group of scientists to develop a gas or a sophisticated sequestration process that can restore the balance in our atmosphere to pre-industrial levels.

Thirdly, we affirm our support for the Bali Road Map, which precludes the notion that a scientific silver bullet can save humankind from the ill effects of its largely unsustainable development track. We cannot downplay the importance of mitigation and adaptation strategies and the requisite technological and financial contributions set out in the Road Map.

Fourthly, we recommend the articulation of social mobilization as an integral dimension of the Bali Road Map. Yesterday's discussions drew consensus on the need for partnership based on good faith, solidarity and scientific knowledge at every level. What seems to be lacking is a sense of urgency that cuts evenly across all those levels of partnership.

Alongside the ranks of alarmed international scientists and the legions of passionate non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is a spectrum of stakeholders with varying degrees of appreciation of the climate change problem and what needs to be done about it.

Governments are typically caught between competing priorities. In the developing world, sparse Government resources tend to be focused on meeting people's basic needs. In the private sector, on the other hand, the wisdom of the triple bottom line has yet to catch on: a critical mass of chief executive officers has yet to subscribe to the view that profits can be sustained over the long term only if a company takes care to deliver social and environmental benefits at the same time.

Communities, like Governments, are beset by competing priorities. Climate change, while a very serious global concern, still has to be translated into concrete issues that will make it relevant to scientific or specific stakeholders, such as vulnerable island communities and marginal farmers. This is where NGOs, as the ubiquitous links to grass-roots stakeholders, fit perfectly into the picture. In addition, as Mr. Martin Khor of the Third World Network has underscored, they inject the economics of activism that push governments, both national and local, to sort out their priorities and keep corporations transparent and consistent with the principles they espouse.

I believe that one of the most potent formulas for success on any development agenda is a combination of the authority and structure of Government, the resources and enterprise of the private sector and the passion and persistence of civil society. This triumvirate, working in harmony, constitutes a formidable platform for sustainable local action. For this reason, our climate change response framework in the Philippines explicitly brings in social mobilization as a vital dimension.

Just last week, we concluded a multisectoral Philippine Energy Summit. Summit participants from various stakeholder communities concluded that we are entering a new era of unprecedented opportunity to fast-track plans to develop renewable and climate-friendly energy sources as a way of insulating our country from the effects of future oil price shocks. Already, one out of every five light bulbs in our country is powered by geothermal energy, and we are aiming to become the number-one geothermal producer in the world within the next 10 years. With the help of other key stakeholders, we also expect to make significant strides in developing our hydro, wind, solar and biomass energy resources as well.

In the area of energy demand management, our President has mandated the phasing out of all incandescent light bulbs in the Philippines and their replacement with compact fluorescent lamps by the end of 2009, making the Philippines the second Asia-Pacific country, after Australia, to embark on such a ground-breaking initiative.

Fifthly and finally, we support the expressed desire of the United Nations to integrate disparate efforts to help States mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change. This is a timely call for purposeful convergence that should encompass other international development partners extending technical and financial assistance in that field as well.

It would seem incumbent upon the United Nations to seize the role of aligning priorities and programmes within a holistic framework while being mindful of institutional boundaries and mandates so as to guarantee efficiency and strategic impact in the allocation of resources. We propose that the United Nations convene a high-level meeting of all international development agencies for precisely that purpose. In that manner, the contours of the Bali Road Map can be more clearly defined in terms of strict signs demarcating lines of responsibility and commitment across programme areas and across regions and States, while servicing interventional gaps.

It is even conceivable that information technology giants like Google, Yahoo or Microsoft would willingly provide the engine by which to map out the whole range of available technology and financing options in real time, side by side with a picture of evolving demand at the global, regional and national levels. If the creation of a virtual market for climate-oriented interventions can be pulled off, that would be a partnership made in planetary heaven.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Maciej Nowicki, Minister of Environment of Poland.

Mr. Nowicki (Poland): This year in Poland, the fourteenth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change will take place from 1 to 12 December. Poles are very proud of the opportunity to contribute to that important process. The Conference will sum up the achievements of the Convention to date and the results attained within the framework of the Kyoto Protocol.

We would like to ensure that the Poznan Conference makes an important contribution to setting out specific measures in the scope of climate change mitigation and adaptation. The Poznan Conference should also be an important milestone for reaching consensus on commitments to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, which should be achieved at the Copenhagen Conference in 2009. At the Poznan Conference, we would like to focus special attention on demonstrating concrete examples of successful technology transfers and measures related to adaptation to climate change with a view to disseminating such good practices.

We want to showcase, in the form of an exhibition, inventions and pioneering organizational schemes serving to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. A United Nations conference, with the participation of representatives of almost 200 nations, is an excellent place for demonstrating such good examples in order to disseminate them as widely as possible. It is my hope that the exhibition, along with discussion panels within the framework of the Conference, will be a step towards the protection of the Earth's climate.

In conclusion, I would like once again to invite representatives to come in December to Poland and the hospitable city of Poznan, hoping that the fourteenth Conference of the Parties will be an important forum for making concrete progress on climate protection on our mother Earth.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Charles Michel, Minister for Development Cooperation of the Kingdom of Belgium.

Mr. Michel (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): As the most recent *Human Development Report* of the United Nations Development Programme demonstrates, we can no longer distinguish the climate agenda from that of development. It is in that conviction that, in my capacity as Minister for Development Cooperation, I am participating in this debate, and that the Government of Belgium has decided to convene, on 7 March, an international conference on the links between climate and development cooperation issues.

As others have said before me, the time has come for action. Beyond scientific and environmental considerations lies the logic of economics. As calculated and stated by Sir Nicholas Stern, the cost of inaction would be 20 times higher than that of action. Another salient point is the demonstration in a recent study concluded by the World Bank that 55 per cent of its projects are vulnerable to climate change and that no less than 25 per cent are vulnerable to substantial risk, while, as we all know, only 2 per cent have been tested for potential vulnerability to climate change.

The primary victims of climate change are now, and will be even more so in the future, the developing countries. In order to meet that global challenge, a global response is clearly required. In that regard, the United Nations is obviously in a unique position. As emphasized in the Secretary-General's most recent overview of United Nations activities in relation to climate change, numerous actions have already been initiated, of course, yet the major future challenge to

the United Nations will be coordinating such activities and their effectiveness, which must help to enhance their added value. The Member States will have to assume their responsibilities and contribute to developing a structured response. It is only such a coherent structure and the mobilization and involvement of all stakeholders that will allow us to avoid fragmentation, which will necessarily lead to failure.

In that connection, Belgium welcomes the results of the Bali Conference and the dynamic process it launched. The next two years will be of crucial importance to giving concrete content to the targets set in Bali. I should like to submit for the General Assembly's consideration two specific ideas, precisely because we must act now.

On Friday, I will propose to the Belgian Government the creation of a systematic mechanism to mitigate the carbon dioxide emissions created by the official travels of staff members of the Belgian Government and Administration. I believe that public officials must be role models in that field. Although it is clearly a symbolic gesture in the global perspective, it will testify to a proactive stance that will be crucial to making a reality of the Bali commitments.

In the same vein, I would offer another suggestion. Why should the United Nations not consider the possibility of creating a mechanism that would allow it systematically to assess the climatic impact of its activities, be it the deployment of a peacekeeping operation or the launch of a development programme. This test, which I would call a climate test, should make it possible from now on to take well-informed decisions without, of course, creating more bureaucracy. It is a question of verifying whether the actions undertaken have a negative, positive or neutral impact on climate.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Bernard Kouchner, Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of France.

Mr. Kouchner (France) (*spoke in French*): France aligns itself with the statement made by the presidency of the European Union.

First of all, I wish to welcome the initiative taken by the President of the General Assembly. Our meeting today is particularly appropriate. In other words, it is dealing with the right subject, in the right place, at the right time.

It is the right subject, because we know that climate change today is an issue that requires the mobilization of the United Nations as a whole.

It is the right place, because the General Assembly must assume its responsibilities on a question having such grave consequences in terms of economies and development. So it must assume its responsibilities.

And it is the right time, because, following the meeting organized by the Secretary-General on 24 September, we share the principal diagnostics and we know the course to be followed. After the unexpected agreement on the Bali Road Map, the road to Copenhagen is short, but it is strewn with pitfalls.

Three principles should therefore very quickly guide the efforts of the international community — responsibility, equity and pragmatism.

The first principle is responsibility. Thanks to the splendid work done by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change — which was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, may I remind the Assembly — the economic actors and world public opinion are now aware of what is at stake. A global agreement on the post-2012 regime is within our reach, since both hearts and minds are ready for it. It now remains for the political decision-makers around the world to become committed, and those gathered here today represent them. As stressed in the Stern Review, the cost of inaction is too high; we cannot inflict the consequences on future generations.

Europe knows what its duty is. It knows what is expected of it in this as in many other areas. It will not shirk its duty. The European Union today is establishing unprecedented measures that should make it possible to reduce by 20 per cent its emissions by 2020. France, for its part, has legislation committing to a 75 per cent reduction in its emissions by 2050. This resolve is shared by all of French society, which is aware of the importance of what is at stake. And during the French presidency of the European Union, starting on 1 July 2008, we will make some common-sense proposals to all our European partners.

The second principle is equity. The exemplary behaviour of a few will not suffice. It is the international community as a whole that must react.

The United Nations alone provides a framework for universal action. Only the United Nations can reaffirm and fulfil the founding principle of shared but differentiated responsibility.

Here, the least developed countries can make their voices heard. It is here in this forum also that those that finally achieve economic growth can press their legitimate claims. It is here also that those whose very existence is threatened by sea-level rise, desertification, the depletion of natural resources, health risks — I repeat, health risks — and natural disasters can have their say. As always, those perils are both universal and inequitable and both indiscriminate and cruel in their targeting. It is always the poor that suffer more than the rich, particularly in the area that I stressed earlier, public health. And it is in this forum that it will be possible to resolve the apparent contradiction between development and environmental challenges, as is mentioned in the latest human development report of the United Nations Development Programme.

The link between combating poverty, the requirements of economic growth — energy security, in particular — and the necessary struggle against climate change can and should be contained in an innovative policy that, I am sure, will help to define a new paradigm of collective security and development. The United Nations is the only body equal to an ambition of such magnitude.

That does not mean, of course, that other forums are not useful, whether it be the Group of Eight, which I hope will adapt and grow, or the Major Economies Meeting. But their role is to help to produce an agreement that can be pursued only within the framework of the United Nations.

The third principle is pragmatism. The magnitude of what is at stake and of the task is such that we cannot favour one form of action over another. There is no cure-all, no single solution. Progress, as is often the case, can be achieved only by feeling our way, by trial and error, by diversifying initiatives and levels of action.

If we are to resort to market mechanisms to finally establish a global price for carbon emissions, we should perhaps also think about a carbon tax. If we are to develop technology transfers from the North to the South, we must also promote South-South cooperation, which looks very promising. In particular, we must encourage specific cooperation agreements based on a sectoral approach by identifying projects that are suited to each local situation.

Responsibility, equity, pragmatism — on the strength of these three principles, the work of the United Nations can today acquire a new dimension and enable us to take the decisive step that our citizens are awaiting and that our duty imposes upon us. Time is of the essence. France is determined to respond to this pressing challenge.

That is what we in France were doing at the national level during the great moment of debate, evaluation and cross-cutting proposals at the meeting known as the "Grenelle Environment Forum".

And that is what we intend to do here in the General Assembly. Like all our partners in the European Union, we want to see governance on questions of climate change and the environment make speedy progress. We are committed to the values of multilateralism, and we therefore support all initiatives that will make it possible to enhance the effectiveness of the work of the United Nations in this area. We want to see "delivering as one" to address climate change become a reality. The Assembly alone can make this happen. Hence my presence here.

But we must be careful not to spread our efforts too thin. The new and healthy realization of what the environmental challenge involves is creating a host of initiatives that must be better coordinated.

The United Nations system now has irreplaceable tools in the areas of scientific expertise, observation and natural disaster warning and prevention. With greater coordination, we finally will have unparalleled means with which to address climate change in all its dimensions.

By altering the ecological balance and causing desertification, depletion of resources and population displacement, climate change today is contributing to the exacerbation of crisis situations and conflict. It is a global challenge that requires a response from the United Nations. The Security Council, which is responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, must acquire the requisite tools to cope with these threats.

We must be bold, we must be resolute and we must be united, because we have no other choice.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Abdullah, Minister of Home Affairs, Housing and Environment of Maldives.

Mr. Abdullah (Maldives): Let me begin by extending to you, Sir, my gratitude for convening this very important debate. Allow me also to congratulate Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on his deep commitment to and leadership in attaching the highest priority to climate change issues.

In 1938, a British engineer, Guy Stewart Callendar, delivered a speech in London in which he argued that the climate was changing and that emissions of carbon dioxide by human industry were principally to blame. Scientists of the day were intrigued but unconvinced. In 1987, our President, Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, stood before this Assembly and stated that climate change would result in the death of our nation and others like it if urgent corrective measures were not taken. Yet again, leaders and scientists were intrigued but unconvinced. It has taken seven decades of rigorous debate and dedicated research, but today the evidence is clear. Climate change is real, accelerating and human-induced. Today, we all accept climate change as the biggest global emergency of our times.

We have taken our time to reach scientific and political consensus on the nature and threat of climate change. As we now begin to focus on solutions to the climate crisis, time is a luxury we can no longer afford. We should therefore work to build on our momentum from Bali over the coming year by pursuing the following three strategic objectives. First, we must mobilize popular support for climate protection by stressing the human rather than the scientific dimensions of climate change. Secondly, we must ensure that United Nations programmes promote climate protection as an instrument to support sustainable development. Thirdly, we must initiate a programme of governance reform to build adaptive capacity in the most vulnerable States.

Urgent and ambitious actions to tackle climate change will require unprecedented public support. If we are to mobilize the people of the world in that global fight, we will need to make sure that they realize what is really at stake. When we speak about how climate change will compromise biodiversity, let us always remember that hidden behind statistics on species loss is the face of the fisherman who will lose his livelihood as rising ocean temperatures destroy the coral and decimate the fish stocks. When we refer to the alarming decline in food production from increased drought and soil erosion, let us remember the farmer who will no longer be able to feed his family. When we consider the increased frequency and intensity of storms, let us remember the families that will lose their homes and their possessions, and when we speak about sea-level rises, let us remember the bonds of family, community and nationhood that will be irreversibly broken.

Last November, the Maldives convened a meeting to address those issues, which concluded with the adoption of the Male' Declaration on the Human Dimension of Global Climate Change. We will continue to pursue that approach in the coming years. When building public support, we must be conscious of the need to reconcile climate protection with sustainable development. As concerns grow about the health of the global economy, there is an urgent need to demonstrate that investment in clean energy, environmental technologies, innovation and efficient infrastructure will contribute to climate stabilization, create new and better jobs and opportunities, and have a lasting impact on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. In that regard, United Nations agencies have an important role to play in funding for technology transfer, adaptation and the exchange of best practices.

Finally, the chronic lack of adaptive capacity, including financial, technical and institutional resources, means that developing countries, including the least developed countries and low-lying small island States, are ill prepared to deal with climate impacts. Operationalizing the Adaptation Fund in Bali was an important beginning, but far more needs to be done.

For the people of the Maldives — which is among the countries most vulnerable to mounting climate change threats — dealing with climate change and associated sea-level rise is an everyday fact of life. Over the past two decades, we have witnessed first hand the practical realities of climate change. Over 60 per cent of inhabited islands in the Maldives are facing varying degrees of coastal erosion, which is physically threatening the human settlements on our islands.

In Bali, we created a process to address the climate crisis. Bali also delivered a number of agreements beyond launching a process towards a future climate change deal. Maldives is committed to working together with all nations to make the Bali Road Map a success.

I would like to express gratitude to Mayors Bloomberg of New York City and Moratti of Milan, and to many others, for their important contributions to addressing climate change. We are very encouraged by that growing partnership to stabilize climate change. We are equally confident that integrated, coordinated and selfless partnership can save our planet for us and for future generations.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Luciano de Castro, Minister of the Coordination of Environmental Action of Mozambique.

Mr. De Castro (Mozambique) (*spoke in Portuguese; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): At the outset, I would like, on behalf of the Government of Mozambique and on my own behalf, to congratulate the President of the General Assembly on holding this timely debate on climate change. Allow me also to express our appreciation for the Secretary-General's efforts to keep the issue of climate change at the top of the international political agenda.

We associate ourselves with the statements made by the delegations of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China; Bangladesh on behalf of the group of the least developed countries; and Cameroon on behalf of the African Group.

This debate is taking place at a crucial time. Just two months ago, the parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and to the Kyoto Protocol adopted the Bali Action Plan, which will serve as a basis for identifying long-term cooperation actions for the effective and sustainable implementation of the Convention. That demonstrates that climate change is a global issue the solution of which requires the strengthening of international cooperation action with a view to fulfilling the needs for adaptation and mitigation, development and technology transfer, and the mobilization of the necessary and sufficient funding for the implementation of capacity-building programmes designed to deal with the consequences of global warming.

Mozambique sees this debate as a way of fulfilling the United Nations pledge to encourage its Member States to maintain the political momentum reached in Bali in order to accelerate the process of negotiations taking place within the framework of the Convention and its Protocol with a view to achieving concrete results within the agreed-upon time frame, that is, by 2009.

We already have the available information and the required means to jointly face the challenges of mitigating the consequences of climate change. The latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is very detailed in that respect. It indicates the levels of emissions that can be adopted and the corresponding increase in average temperature for each level of reduction to be adopted, as well as the resulting consequences.

Every year, Mozambique is hit by drought, floods and tropical cyclones. As we speak, the central region of the country is being devastated by flooding and, as a result, as of 31 January there were eight fatalities and approximately 95,000 people affected, and more than 290 thousand acres of varied crops, 21,326 homes, 468 school rooms and 119 wells destroyed.

Those figures refer to this year alone. In addition, we are suffering the consequences of last year's floods, with an ongoing process of recovery and resettlement of the affected communities. As all can see, the occurrence of such cyclical incidents in Mozambique has hampered the Government's efforts towards the social and economic development of the country and poverty reduction, thus constraining the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

The Government of Mozambique has made efforts to approach those disaster situations by integrating the issue of climate change into its national development policies, strategies and programmes. Mozambique has adopted relevant related strategic work instruments, such as a land reform policy and law, a master plan for the prevention and mitigation of natural disasters, a sustainable development environmental strategy, an integrated management strategy for water resources and a national action plan for adaptation to climate change. Also under way is the preparation of a national strategy for new and renewable energy sources, and a biofuels and environmental action plan under the framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

The drafting of those and other documents involved Government research institutions, the private sector and civil society. Those instruments will contribute to capacity-building for the improvement of the quality of life of the Mozambican people.

In conclusion, we reiterate our commitment to the United Nations global agenda, in particular the Bali Action Plan. We believe that only by joining efforts will we be able to minimize the impact of climate change. The world will never win the battle if we squander this opportunity.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Kwadwo Adjei-Darko, Minister of Local Government, Rural Development and Environment of Ghana.

Mr. Adjei-Darko (Ghana): To begin with, my delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda.

The year 2007 has gone down in history as a year that saw unprecedented action on the issue of climate change. This week's meeting should further help to maintain the momentum that was generated in 2007.

The Bali Action Plan identifies four main building blocks that need to be considered in any future international agreement on climate change: enhanced national and international action on mitigation of climate change; enhanced action on adaptation; enhanced action on technology development and transfer to support action on mitigation and adaptation; and enhanced action on the provision of financial resources and investments to support actions on mitigation and adaptation and technology cooperation.

It has become increasingly apparent that multilateralism, with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change at the forefront, is the surest way to address the climate change challenge, which has such a global dimension. The United Nations system should therefore develop strategic objectives to promote the development of national and international policies that support the effective implementation of those four building blocks for future agreement on climate change. The United Nations agencies can work with national Governments in mainstreaming climate change into development planning, as well as into national decentralization processes.

Currently, the Office of the United Nations Development Programme in Ghana, as part of its annual work programme for 2008, is working with the Ghana Government to disseminate the *Human Development Report 2007/2008*, which has climate change as its theme, with a view to, inter alia, raising awareness both at the community and the highest political levels and to supporting Ghana's Government in implementing concrete adaptation programmes in seven selected pilot districts in the country. This concrete example demonstrates how the United Nations system, including its agencies, can assist Member States in addressing mitigation actions and policies and in scaling up support for adaptation efforts at the national level.

The United Nations system could take concrete action in moving from talk about technology to actual deployment and transfer of climate-friendly technologies to developing countries. It could do so by initiating an international agreement on the development and transfer of technology under the existing United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to ensure, inter alia, the implementation of technology needs identified through country-driven processes, the implementation of joint research and development programmes and activities in the development of new technologies, the implementation of technology development and transfer demonstration projects, the creation of an enabling environment for technology development and transfer and the promotion of North-South and South-South cooperation.

The Government of Ghana stands ready to actively engage in the discussion of future international agreements to address the threats climate change poses to sustainable development, including the devastating impacts of climate change on Governments' efforts to reduce poverty.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Diekumpuna Sita José, Minister of Urbanism and Environment of Angola.

Mr. Sita José (Angola) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the Government of Angola, allow me to congratulate the Secretary-General and all the organizations of the United Nations system on the activities being intensively carried out in connection with climate change.

Angola aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, as well as that which will be made by Bangladesh on behalf of the group of least developed countries.

During the Bali summit, the Secretary-General reaffirmed that fighting global warming is the principal moral challenge for our generation. Well before that, our heads of State and Government gathered in this magnificent auditorium in September 2007 to support this idea and launch an appeal that expressed the will to assume a multilateral commitment on global warming under the aegis of the United Nations system.

The fourth report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change confirms that human activities are unequivocally the cause of global warming and recommends that we act as a matter of urgency. Observing the effects of climate change does not reveal a bright future for humankind, particularly in the small island States and least developed countries.

We must all consider that we do not have the right to transfer to future generations the sad legacy associated with the warming of the planet.

In the case of African countries, in spite of their miniscule contribution to the emission of greenhouse gases, the effects of climate change on their economies are already evident. Many African counties are severely affected by drought and desertification. We are already witnessing the serious damage caused by drastic changes in precipitation patterns. These disruptions penalize populations that are already needy and hamper the implementation of food security programmes as well as programmes for the alleviation of poverty, all of which are designed to complement efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

In Bali, we took the first steps towards a new comprehensive climate agreement on the lowest greenhouse gas emissions compatible with economic growth. The next steps to be taken must address the effective operationalization of the Adaptation Fund and other financing mechanisms, as well as encourage international cooperation that is able to respond to the major challenges imposed by climate change.

We have full confidence in the capacity of the United Nations system to confront the main challenges posed by climate change. That is why we have come here today to express our commitment to the desired and indispensable collective efforts for the best possible outcome to the successful negotiation of a general comprehensive post-2012 agreement before the end of 2009, on the basis of the Bali Road Map.

Recognizing that all parties must contribute in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, Angola, a country which has been living in peace for the past six years but which is engaged in a difficult process of national reconstruction, will do its best to encourage and mobilize all private and public actors, non-governmental organizations and local communities to participate in the implementation of the national strategy prepared in accordance with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol. This strategy was announced here in September 2007 by José Eduardo dos Santos, President of the Republic of Angola.

The partners of our Government are called upon to adhere to multisectoral measures and programmes, including actions in such areas as renewable energy production, rail transport, preservation of primary forests and creation of forested preserves, the use of clean technologies in industry and the oil sector, which has been trying for a long time to eliminate greenhouse gas emissions associated with oil production.

To enable the least developed countries, such as ours, to participate effectively in the collective efforts of mitigation and adaptation, it is imperative for the United Nations system to give priority assistance to national and regional initiatives that are aimed at: first, developing capacities for ongoing observation and systemic analysis of the effects of climate change; secondly, assisting the development of local early warning systems and plans for the prevention of natural risks; thirdly, encouraging sustainable tropical forestry and combating deforestation; fourthly, ensuring access to clean technologies; and, finally, improving access to available financing through the United Nations system, it being hoped that additional funds will be forthcoming to this end.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Ahmed Nihar, Minister of Environment and Urban Development of the Sudan.

Mr. Nihar (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I commend you, Sir, for presiding over this important thematic debate which undoubtedly addresses one of the greatest challenges that the world

faces today, namely, climate change. I wish to express our appreciation for your initiative in arranging a continuation of our debate on this subject. We are grateful to you and the Secretary-General for taking a personal interest in climate change.

We align ourselves with the statements made by the Group of 77 and China, the African Group and the least developed countries (LDCs) and, lastly, with the statement to be given by the Arab Group.

We gather here today following the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which took place in Bali, Indonesia, and served as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol. We consider the session to have been successful and hope that the road map it produced will expedite efforts to implement international commitments to combating climate change.

Given its geographical location, vast area, biological diversity and development situation, the Sudan is one of the countries most affected by climate change and most vulnerable to it, both now and in the foreseeable future. This is why we attach such importance to being able to adapt to the negative impacts of climate change and to adopt ways of mitigating its effects on our national development.

The Sudan has therefore devised a national programme of adaptation to climate change which includes urgent measures aimed at combating poverty, ensuring food security, supplying water, providing health care, and reducing deforestation and desertification. In addition, this programme includes recommendations for establishing institutional policies and frameworks so that we can then implement the adaptation measures.

We have presented an implementation strategy to the UNFCCC secretariat. We hope that it will be financed by the funds established within the framework of the UNFCCC and by all those who support developing countries in their efforts to combat climate change.

We believe that international solidarity and effective participation are highly important in addressing climate change. Although we have not contributed significantly to the emission of greenhouse gases, we have taken steps and adopted policies to reduce their emission. In the field of energy, we have introduced measures to enhance the provision of energy for sustainable development. We have taken steps to ensure a balanced policy in the production and use of oil for sustainable development, while giving much thought to the protection of the environment.

The Ministry of Energy and Mining has passed a law on environmental protection in the oil industry. The Government has also taken some significant steps to promote the use of renewable, clean energy, such as solar energy. The Sudan has made strides in the use of hydroelectric energy through cooperation with the Nile Basin Countries and a power trading programme, in addition to implementing land and forest rehabilitation and reclamation and action to combat deforestation.

We welcome the decisions adopted in Bali, in particular with respect to the honouring of commitments and time frames in order to create a sustainable system aimed at reducing the catastrophic effects of climate change on developing countries and especially on LDCs and States in Africa. We are concerned by the fourth report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which states that certain levels of climate change are inevitable, even if we commit ourselves to drastic measures to reduce emissions, owing to the existing accumulation of greenhouse gas emissions and the time frame required to reduce the current level of those emissions.

The crux of the matter is that the most vulnerable countries will bear the burden of inevitable climate change. This will mean more disasters, reduced economic and social development capabilities and more conflicts over scarce resources.

The Fourth Assessment Report of the IPCC clearly indicates that adaptation is our only option. We therefore believe that any future agreement should include clearer and more specific commitments designed to support the efforts of affected countries in Africa and the least developed countries to adapt to climate change. To ensure the effective honouring of these commitments, the establishment of active institutional frameworks and mechanisms should be included. Enough conferences have been held. Now it is time to face the real challenge: that of implementing.

We much appreciate the decisions adopted in Bali for the implementation of the agreement and the Protocol, especially the activation of the Adaptation Fund. We hope that this Fund will make possible the

direct implementation of specific projects that enable us to adapt effectively and urgently to climate change.

We also hope that there will be action in developing countries to combat deforestation, which affects livelihoods in poor countries. We expect measures of a practical nature to be undertaken in this regard.

As to the development of technologies and technology transfer, which are very important in combating climate change, we believe that they can be achieved only by addressing the main and fundamental constraints impeding follow-up to the commitments contained in the agreement, which persist despite the fact that ten years have elapsed since entry into force of this agreement.

We appreciate the increasing role played by various United Nations bodies in mobilizing resources and establishing frameworks and agreements in order to address the problems that affect all humanity in an effective, equitable and impartial manner. We regard the UNFCCC as the main legal framework for addressing climate change, in accordance with the Rio principles and on the basis of common but differentiated responsibilities and the three main pillars of sustainable development: economic growth, social development and protection of the environment.

We hope that the necessary resources will be made available to the African countries and the LDCs in their adaptation efforts. We believe that adaptation to climate change makes it incumbent on the developed countries — which are chiefly responsible for producing high levels of greenhouse gas emissions — and on this international Organization to create appropriate policy and institutional frameworks and to provide urgent, direct and predictable support to developing countries, so that they can adapt to the inevitable occurrences of climate change. Here, we would like to reiterate the importance of implementation.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Jean-Marie Claude Germain, Minister of Environment of Haiti.

Mr. Germain (Haiti) (*spoke in French*): I am pleased to take the floor in this debate on the theme: "Addressing climate change: the United Nations and the world at work".

Allow me, first of all, to sincerely thank the President of the General Assembly for this initiative and for the invitation to participate in this meeting. I wish him every success in achieving this noble task.

Haiti fully aligns itself with the statement made by the Group of 77 and China and is gratified by the renewed interest accorded to global problems. We welcome the long-term choice of the international community to act on the basis of reality rather than illusion and approximation. In view of the cause and effect duality of climate change, we are fully convinced that we are already involved in an unprecedented global crisis.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) entered into force in 1994, and the successive scientific evaluations have indisputably confirmed that human activity modifies the atmosphere. This fact is also set out in the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

Expected population growth in the next decade and the demographic pressure of certain regions add a particularly disconcerting dimension to this problem. Furthermore, it is the populations of the small island developing States, those most vulnerable and least responsible for these severe climate changes, which will unjustly pay the price for them.

We now know that there is no way to rid ourselves of greenhouse gas emissions. We also know that, even if we were to put an end to all greenhouse gas emissions today, the ensuing climate changes would not be felt for decades because of the atmospheric lifetime of carbon dioxide.

The only path left to us is that of proportionally reducing greenhouse gas emissions, according to the common but differentiated responsibilities principle.

Today, Haiti, like the other small island developing States, is confronted by a number of internal challenges connected to climate change which dangerously threaten economic, social and environmental conditions and, consequently, limit its ability to reduce poverty and realize its sustainable development objectives.

Because of its geographical location, Haiti, like many neighbouring Caribbean countries, is every year susceptible to tropical storms and other meteorological threats, which may very well be made worse by climate

change in the decades to come. According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Haiti is the most vulnerable of all Latin American and Caribbean countries. Furthermore, it has the least resilience to weather the environmental shocks and stresses resulting from natural disasters and risks and accentuated by climate change. Haiti experienced a host of natural disasters during the twentieth century — disasters which cost the lives of thousands and were responsible for millions of dollars worth of material damage.

Almost all small island developing States, in particular the Republic of Haiti and the Dominican Republic, forming the island of Quisqueya, are becoming more vulnerable. Every year, these two States suffer natural disasters. Their financial resources, instead of being dedicated to building social infrastructure and to productive and profitable activities in the context of development, are allocated to repairing the resulting environmental damage.

At this very moment, one of the border ports engaged in busy trade between Haiti and the Dominican Republic is in the process of becoming defunct; a shared means of international communication is progressively deteriorating because of the flooding and overflowing of one of the biggest frontier lakes, Lake Azuéï.

The most recent damage in the two countries, caused by tropical storm Noël, clearly showed how an event, even a moderate one, can produce significant macroeconomic effects and constitute an additional factor delaying achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

As His Excellency, Mr. René Garcia Preval emphasized in his statement on 24 September 2007 at the meeting of Heads of State on Climate Change in the General Assembly Hall:

> "no matter requires a more urgent response on the part of the international community than climate change which undoubtedly represents the most important environmental issue of our day and presents the most disturbing challenge to world development".

In accordance with this vision, Haiti, after signing and ratifying the Convention on Climate Change, prepared a National Plan of Action for Adaptation to Climate Change composed of a number of multisectoral projects growing out of national dialogue, took on additional commitments to the international community by signing and ratifying other relevant multilateral agreements, including the Kyoto Protocol, the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention to Combat Desertification.

Haiti is also in the process of setting up a designated national authority as a guarantee of its commitment to the Kyoto Protocol.

Aware of the decisive importance of climate monitoring and forecasting in order to protect people and property, Haiti has set up a National Environment Vulnerability Observatory. This will make it possible for us to have reliable and pertinent data, increase our adaptability and integrate climate data and forecasts into evaluation and decision-making processes so as to derive as much benefit as possible in socio-economic terms.

Similarly, and by way of adaptation measures, the Haitian Government has just, among other activities, promoted a trilateral accord with Cuba and the Dominican Republic which lays the foundation for the creation of a biological corridor on land and sea. This pioneering Caribbean initiative, which is strongly supported by the regional branch of the United Nations Environment Programme, will make it possible to place humankind at the centre of concerns and activities, thereby reducing poverty, preserving biodiversity, providing goods and services to the populations of these three countries and ensuring the survival of vulnerable ecosystems which are sensitive to climate change.

Today, there is a growing awareness of climate change. The weather has validated the conclusions of the fourth assessment report of the IPCC and there are many more of us who share the same diagnosis.

What we now have to do is to come together to serve the main cause, which is to protect and save lives. I continue to believe that the impact of climate change and climate variation on human activity and ecosystems presents considerable challenges with respect to sustainable development.

The situation of Haiti, like that of most of the small island developing States, clearly illustrates the interdependence of climate change, poverty, natural

risks and disasters, desertification and the loss of biodiversity.

I would like to take this opportunity to appeal to the international community to further intensify as a matter of urgency its support for the efforts of small island developing States, which it has recognized as being particularly fragile and vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Michael Kaingu, Minister of Tourism, Environment and Natural Resources of Zambia.

Mr. Kaingu (Zambia): I am very grateful for the opportunity to participate in this very important debate on climate change, and I commend the organizers of this important event.

We may all recall that the fourth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change unambiguously established the facts of global warming and showcased the perceptible signs of the changing climate in various locations in the world. The projected increases — up to 5.8 Celsius degrees by the year 2100 in some scenarios — are estimated to be up to 100 times faster than some of the other major spikes in temperature in the history of the Earth.

Reports also stress that this global warming will increasingly affect human and natural systems and will have potentially disastrous effects on local, regional and global economies. The economic impacts of climate change will likely be unevenly distributed across regions and within economies and societies, with secondary effects including higher prices, reduced income and job losses. These will outweigh benefits for most sectors that provide essential goods and services to society, and will place immense strain on the public sector.

Poor countries like Zambia will suffer most, because we do not have the capacity to face the impacts of climate change. Our predominant concerns relate to the alleviation of poverty, which overshadows issues of climate change. As I address the Assembly now, Zambia is experiencing unprecedented floods that are wreaking havoc, displacing people and washing away bridges, culverts and roads.

Today, I wish to share with the Assembly what my Government is doing in trying to address climate change and other challenges that we face. My Government signed the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) on 11 June 1992 and ratified it on 28 May 1993. Also, we signed the Kyoto Protocol on 5 August 1998 and ratified it on 7 July 2006.

Although Zambia does not have a specific policy on climate change, our fifth national development plan recognizes climate change as a challenge. The fifth national development plan forecasts that climate change may reduce rainfall between 8 and 30 per cent and advocates measures that address this challenge.

The issue of climate change is also provided for in our recently approved national policy on environment. Furthermore, climate change is well articulated in other environmental sector programmes. In this regard, the following activities have been undertaken by my Government. I would like to thank and commend the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Global Environment Facility for giving us support in this regard.

Zambia's initial national communication was completed and submitted to the UNFCCC in 2006. The two-year formulation of the second national communication was initiated in 2007. In addition to reporting on the progress of UNFCCC implementation, the second communication process will also serve as a management tool, indicating the gaps in current national capacity to address the issue of climate change management.

The National Adaptation Programme of Action was submitted to the UNFCCC secretariat in 2007. The National Adaptation Programme of Action specifically addresses immediate pressing adaptation priorities in food security and public health. The Programme also points out that there is evidence of climate change affecting other sectors, such as forests, wildlife, land management, energy and tourism. We are now in need of resources to implement the Programme of Action.

A national authority designated to approve Clean Development Mechanism projects has been established, formed by an ad hoc board of the most relevant national stakeholders in the Mechanism process and hosted by the Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Natural Resources.

In line with the commitments stemming from UNFCCC membership, my Government has also undertaken a comprehensive national climate change

awareness campaign, the objective of which is to ensure national ownership and the success of future climate change-related efforts, through sensitization and national consensus-building.

The national capacity self-assessment for the implementation of the Rio Convention was completed by the UNFCCC focal point in 2007. The assessment identifies the gaps in national capacity for the effective implementation of the United Nations Conventions on biodiversity, climate change and desertification, and proposes a strategy and an action plan to address those gaps.

A study of the economic impact of climate change in Zambia, with support from UNDP, will commence soon. Rigorous analysis has demonstrated that climate change is of critical importance to the short-, medium- and long-term development priorities for Zambia as set forth in the fifth national development plan.

My Government has also documented a national implementation plan for the management of persistent organic pollutants pursuant to the Stockholm Convention, which sets out to protect human health and the environment from persistent organic pollutants. This document was completed in April 2007.

This forum provides us with an opportunity to participate in promoting partnerships and consider the most appropriate approach for the United Nations and the world at large to take to address climate change, in order to ease the impacts that will be exerted on countries like Zambia and to forestall the reversal of developmental gains that may arise as a result of climate change.

In conclusion, let me emphasize the importance of early action in addressing the threat of climate change. We need to address the root cause of this problem by taking decisive action at the global level to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Lufter Xhuveli, Minister of the Environment, Forests and Water Administration of Albania.

Mr. Xhuveli (Albania): It is my special pleasure to participate in this important thematic debate, which focuses on global climate change, one of today's most challenging and threatening issues for humanity. I would like to thank the United Nations for organizing this very important debate.

Climate change is a complex and serious threat. It has been shown that climate change arises mostly from unsustainable development — unsustainable energy production, unsustainable energy consumption, unsustainable industrial development, unsustainable land use, unsustainable lifestyles, et cetera. The experience of responding to the climate change threat is fundamentally linked to concerns of sustainable development, vulnerability and adaptation, the economy and poverty reduction.

Albania joined the countries that gathered in New York under the leadership of the Secretary-General to call for a breakthrough to be reached in Bali. We went to Bali with the aim of offering our modest contribution to make that breakthrough happen. We are here today to follow up on the real breakthrough achieved in the climate change negotiations last December, thanks to the historic attention and support that was focused on the issue in the course of last year.

While bearing very little responsibility for global greenhouse gas emissions, Albania is bearing the majority of the environmental, social and economic consequences of climate change, as is the majority of the developing world. Despite its relatively small carbon footprint, due to its heavy reliance on hydropower, Albania, like the rest of the world, is significantly affected by climate change, with increased temperatures, less precipitation and other consequences.

Albania's needs for adaptation to face climate changes are significant and diverse. They touch upon sectors including tourism, coastal areas, agriculture and ecosystems. Governmental programmes will have to respond to the consequences of climate change and address climate change risk in its national and local development plans.

The Government of Albania is committed to fulfilling all its obligations arising from the global United Nations conventions, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol. From this point of view, we consider the role of the United Nations to be that of a catalyst in leading and supporting efforts to mitigate climate change, not only at the international level but also at the national level.

Albania is implementing a programme of activities aimed at reducing the growth rate of greenhouse gas emissions, adapting to the negative impacts of climate change and enabling carbon financing mechanisms under the coordination of and with support provided by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The Albanian Government has voluntarily joined the One United Nations Initiative, which provides new opportunities for addressing, inter alia, global environmental issues, specifically climate change, through the application of new approaches and new forms of partnership.

Although Albania has no reduction commitments under the Kyoto Protocol, we are nevertheless aiming to promote the sustainable growth of its economy. We are aware that energy is a prerequisite to achieve that goal. In Albania's circumstances, that is a clear challenge that brings together two important concerns: energy security and climate change. Through its fiscal policies, the promotion of renewable energy sources and the operationalization of its institutions dealing with carbon finance mechanisms, Albania seeks to achieve a carbon-neutral economy. It has also increased its capacities to take advantage of and benefit from the very dynamic and emerging carbon market. The role and support of the United Nations has been significant, indeed crucial, in that direction.

There is potential in Albania for the cost-effective reduction of greenhouse gas emissions which are generated by outdated and inefficient energy consumption and the relative failure to exploit sources of renewable energy. Developed countries have shown great interest in reducing emissions in return for carbon credits from the Albanian energy and forests sectors. The Government of Albania's positive response to this interest has already led to the signing of the first emission reduction purchase agreement, between the Government of Albania and the BioCarbon Fund of the World Bank, and two other cooperation agreements with the Governments of Italy and Denmark.

In 2007 alone, the Albanian Government has supported investments in about 50 small hydropower plants, and it will continue to do so in the years to come. Also, taking advantage of favourable environmental conditions, the production of about 1,000 megawatts of power from wind farms will soon become a reality. At the same time, we are implementing policies that aim at reducing forest exploitation along with the forestation and reforestation of vast areas of the country.

As it pursues development, Albania will continue to maintain its low level of greenhouse gas emissions. In this way, we are providing our modest contribution to saving our planet from climate change. Albania considers the climate change challenge to be an opportunity to address mitigation and adaptation actions in the context of sustainable development.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Ligia Castro, Administrator General of the National Authority of Environment of Panama.

Ms. Castro (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): Climate change is a fact, as is our vulnerability and the need for us to adapt. In our countries, extreme climate events have been recorded, with the loss of human life and serious material damage which perpetuate and exacerbate poverty and require immediate responses with alternatives for a dignified life for our people.

Today we are suffering because of the inaction of those who came before us and their ignorance of the existence of climate change. But today we are aware of what is happening. Hence the urgency to move from dialogue to action, in order to ensure that future generations do not have to pay the price of our failure to act in time, knowing that this change exists.

Are we vulnerable? Yes, we know that. Do we have to plan sustainable development? That, too, we know. Do we have to adapt, because we cannot control climate change? We know that, too. Do we have to mitigate greenhouse gases? There is no doubt about that either. But all of this comes at a price, and the cost is higher for the developing countries. Our vulnerability grows faster than our capacity to adapt.

That is why this debate is key, because, today, action is being defined that could change the behaviours of our societies that have brought about the current climate conditions. For that, what is needed is more than the political will of Governments; what is needed is to make private enterprises, trade unions, professional organizations and political parties aware, so that they understand that if they fulfil environmental standards in each country and invest in new clean, efficient technology, ultimately we will together be able, in an alliance with the rest of society, to begin building sustainable development in our countries.

We wish to stress the responsibility of the developed countries which, on the basis of the principle of shared but differentiated responsibility, should increase their efforts and carry out responsible policies to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, considering the opportunities outlined in the Kyoto Protocol, which was the first step agreed to by the international community to reduce greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere. Also, they must support adaptation initiatives in the framework of the Climate Change Convention.

The international carbon market has created great expectations for the developing countries, and Panama is placing its hopes in this market to achieve financial flows directed towards alleviating the problem of extreme poverty and is comprehensively analysing the problem from the social, economic and cultural perspectives. We will do this through direct investment, in communities that are located near projects, of 30 per cent of income from carbon credits in social and environmental projects, as decided in each case by Panama's communities and local governments. Furthermore, we have created an annual fund whereby, for each megawatt generated by power plants, $5,000 are provided for services related to drinking water, energy, improved living conditions, bio-digester sanitation that allows cooking without firewood, and other kinds of necessary social infrastructure.

The United Nations and its Member States must energize financial flows to address climate change unequivocally so as to support each and every effort made by countries like ours to mitigate its effects, both through the transfer of technology and through the promotion of renewable energy and efficient energy production. For a small country we are making a great effort, but we feel that those who are truly responsible must fulfil their duty to improve our capacity to adapt.

Panama has been following the issue of reducing emissions from deforestation and land degradation. Many efforts have been made in the past, but the results have not been encouraging. The deforestation rate in our country is high and will continue to rise unless major efforts and investments are made to lower it. However, the problem is quite complex and requires major investments.

The Bali Road Map provides clear directions in that regard, and we call for the cooperation of all in order to reach agreement and halt the process, which will not only reduce carbon dioxide emissions, but will also help to achieve the true sustainable development of communities that today have no means of generating income but which are also the most vulnerable communities of our countries. Only in that way will they be able to adapt.

Teamwork is key to achieving the goals set out in the Bali Road Map, the agenda of which also includes issues to be negotiated by the end of 2009 to establish guidelines concerning the commitments to be undertaken by the end of 2012, which marks the final date of the first commitment period.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.